

EXPEDITION

RE UMBERTO 2007

DISCOVERY AND IDENTIFICATION

(Official Press Release)

In November 1915 War Minister Zuppelli, severely criticized by Chief of Staff General Cadorna, decided to send the Italian “Special Corps” to Albania with the task of reinforcing the fortified harbour of Valona, already under the control of Italian forces. The first convoy left on December



Piroscafo misto Re Umberto al varo

Foto Fondazione Ansaldo

2nd 1915; the second one, consisting of the troop carrier steamers Re Umberto and Valparaiso escorted by four destroyers, departed from Taranto in the afternoon of 3rd December 1915. At 9.45 the ships had already passed Punta Linguetta and were sailing in the security channel towards the Bay of Valona when a loud explosion was heard and a high column of smoke and water rose from the port

side of the Re Umberto which fifteen minutes later broke in two pieces and sank. A few hours later the destroyer Intrepido was hit by a mine, and, severely damaged, was left stranded near Punta Linguetta and sank a few days later. The two sinkings were caused by the mines laid by the German submarine UC14, commanded by Oberleutnant zur See Caesar Bauer, the same team that one year later would sink the battleship “Regina Margherita”.

At 9.30 on 15th August 2007 the Instructor Trainer Cesare Balzi, who had been searching, in behalf of IANTD, for the Re Umberto for over a year, found a wreck broken in two parts near the place where the ship was supposed to have sunk. Our search had begun in January 2006 and was given a real chance of success by the discovery of an old photograph showing the Intrepido, stranded near Punta Linguetta with Saseno island in the background. After a while the remains of the destroyer were found, as we at IANTD announced on 9th June 2007, and subsequently the search continued at depth until 15th August, when the second wreck was found.



CT Intrepido - Punta Linguetta 4 dicembre 1915

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From that point the expedition was planned, Cesare began work on organizing it in Albania and a three year cooperation agreement was drawn up between IANTD S.r.l. and the Institute of



Sub sulla fiancata della Re Umberto

Foto M. Rancan (C) IANTD S.r.l.

Archaeology of Tirana. The principal parties to the agreement were Cesare himself, representing IANTD S.r.l., and Dr. Adrian Anastasi of the Institute of Archaeology of Tirana.

The first step in the plan was the execution of an official underwater IANTD expedition, carried out between 26th September and 3rd October, to verify that the wreck was indeed the Re Umberto and to provide

video and photographic documentation. The secondary objective of the expedition was to carry out video and photographic documentation of the wreck of the Intrepido as well, this wreck having been previously located and identified with the help of local IANTD operators working in conjunction with the Delegazione Italiana Esperti in Albania, the 28° Gruppo Navale of the Italian Navy (Marina Militare) and the Association Amici del Museo e della Storia of La Spezia. Taking part in the expedition were seven IANTD instructors and divers experienced in mixed gas trimix and nitrox diving and with the skills required to accomplish the tasks of the expedition. They were: Fabio Ruberti – expedition leader, Cesare Balzi – deputy expedition leader and organizer, Carla Binelli – administrative-organizational secretary, Massimiliano Canossa – video-operator, Nicola Boninsegna – photograph, Massimiliano Rancan – photograph, Livio Loniti – video-operator; Prof. Afrim Hoti and Dr. Adrian Anastasi were present throughout the operations. The expedition was supported by IANTD Training Facilities Acquamarina of Marina di Pisa and Nautica MareDive of Verona, who provided the video and photographic team, and by technical diving equipment manufacturers Acquamarina®, Dive Rite® and Delta P Technology®. Nardi provided a portable compressor which was very useful logistically. Boat cover was provided by local IANTD operators. The expedition has been supported by the Italian Embassy and by Delegazione Italiana Esperti in Albania.



Il timone e le eliche dell'Intrepido

Foto M. Rancan (C) IANTD S.r.l.

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The expedition successfully identified the wreck as the troop-carrier Re Umberto and produced useful video-photographic material both of the wreck of Re Umberto and of the Intrepido despite strong current and poor visibility, especially during the initial wreck dives.

The expedition was very successful as:

- numerous technical dives were conducted to depths up of 70 meters in conditions of poor visibility and strong current
- the twin goals of documenting two exceptional discoveries and explaining an important historical event were achieved,
- a large amount of research had led to the discovery of the two wrecks and
- it took a huge organisational effort to put in place all the logistics, equipment and technical support required, in view of the almost total absence of local infrastructure.

All this needed a huge commitment by all expedition members and, as usual, everyone displayed enthusiasm and great skill.

Two years on from the discovery of the wreck of battleship Regina

Margherita and the subsequent expedition, IANTD Expeditions, thanks to Cesare Balzi and all the members of the expedition, has achieved another great success.



Fabio Ruberti

Expedition Leader Re Umberto 2007
President IANTD Expeditions®
IANTD® S.r.l.

Marina di Pisa, 5 ottobre 2007